

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1294

By Brown

A RESOLUTION to honor the 40th Anniversary of the Freedom Rides for Voter Education.

WHEREAS, in the history of our Nation there are those events and moments in time that saw the selfless actions of individuals, working together as one, result in social and political change; and

WHEREAS, in the Summer of 1964 a highly publicized campaign in the Deep South to register African-Americans to vote was coordinated by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Council (SNCC); and

WHEREAS, "Freedom Summer" marked the climax of intensive voter-registration activities in the South that had started in 1961; thousands of civil rights activists, many of whom were college students, descended on the South as part of Freedom Rides for Voter Education, meeting sharp resistance, facing threats and harassment throughout the campaign; and

WHEREAS, over 1,000 volunteers were arrested, dozens of African-American owned homes, businesses and churches were destroyed, at least 80 volunteers were assaulted and beaten and three, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner, were murdered in Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, the combination of the horrible tragedies and the well-publicized voter registration drives brought national attention to the injustice of African-American disenfranchisement and eventually led to passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965; and

WHEREAS, now, forty years later, to honor the actions of those courageous Americans a group of students and activists will retrace the path of the 1960s civil rights workers through the South as part of Freedom Ride 2004, a national effort to encourage African-American youths to vote; and

WHEREAS, the Unity Group and the James E. Chaney Foundation are sponsoring a local stop in Chattanooga on June 15, 2004, as an expected 800 students arrive in Hamilton County to participate in neighborhood voter registration drives and voter education activities; and

WHEREAS, the original Freedom Riders of 1964 ensured that today every American can be a full participant in the democratic electoral process and it is highly appropriate that this body pays tribute to their remarkable bravery; and

WHEREAS, this body should also honor those individuals who are working to commemorate the past by reminding every citizen of the most treasured American right, the right to vote; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend the participants of Freedom Ride 2004 as they retrace the courageous path of the original Freedom Riders and join with them in commemorating the 40th Anniversary of Freedom Rides for Voter Education.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we also join with the members of Freedom Ride 2004 with their mission to encourage every American to register to vote.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.